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SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/SE AND EUR/RPM
DOD FOR OSD/ISP

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [GR](#) [AF](#) [NATOAFGHAN](#)

SUBJECT: GREEKS CONSIDERING ISAF PRT, BUT MAY NEED HELP
GETTING TO "YES"

REF: THE HAGUE 210

Classified By: Ambassador Charles P. Ries for Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

1. (C) Summary. Greek leaders know that ISAF's Stage III expansion will increase pressure on them to increase their contribution to NATO's efforts in Afghanistan. Senior officials are contemplating offering to assume command of a PRT in the north, but are uneasy about the domestic political consequences if Greeks troops suffer casualties and have little appetite for explaining to ordinary Greeks why what happens in Kabul matters in Athens. Nevertheless, Greece wants to improve its standing as an ally, and can likely be persuaded to take part in a PRT. We will continue to lay the groundwork for a positive decision, while looking for an appropriate time to push for a "yes" at the political decision some time this spring. Greek decisionmaking may be affected by personnel issues, with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense possible targets of a rumored cabinet reshuffle. End Summary.

2. (C) In recent months, Embassy officers have urged senior MFA and MOD officials, including the Defense Minister and his diplomatic advisor, senior officers in the Hellenic National Defense General Staff (HNDGS), and staff of the Foreign Ministry's NATO Directorate, to consider Greece taking command of an ISAF PRT in northern Afghanistan. In November, HNDGS Policy Planning Chief Ioannis Albertos told DATT and poloff that his office had studied the military requirements of staffing a PRT, and was ready to proceed. It is clear, though, that a decision on a PRT will be made at the very highest levels in the government. In a mid-January meeting with Ambassador, FM Molyviatis was careful not to exclude the possibility but said he was not yet able to deliver.

3. (C) Officials attribute their unwillingness to allow Greek troops to serve outside of Kabul to their fear that the popular reaction to Greek casualties would make it impossible to maintain even the current level of contribution in Afghanistan. It is hard to imagine the kind of open, vigorous debate on a deployment to Afghanistan that took place in the Netherlands (reftel) occurring in Greece. While both major political parties (quietly) support ISAF, virtually no Greek politician is prepared to explain to the Greek public why what happens in Kabul matters in Athens. Instead, the government has pursued a policy of incrementally increasing its contributions to ISAF operations in the capital while avoiding any publicity of those contributions. For example, in a December meeting with PolCouns, DMOD Michaliolakos appeared taken aback by the suggestion that his Ministry help Greek media cover the "good news" story of Greek doctors treating ordinary Afghans at the Role 2 Medical Facility at the Kabul airport or Greek construction engineers rebuilding schools in the capital.

4. (C) One way to focus Greek thinking would be to walk policy-level officials through the specifics of what assuming command of a PRT might entail. The upcoming visit to Washington of a Greek delegation led by MFA NATO Division Director Zographos (septel) provides an opportunity to cover a range of issues, including, first and foremost, a rundown of where and when a Greek PRT might be needed. Other topics of interest to the Greeks would be; specifics on what running a PRT has cost other countries; information on the kinds of non-military personnel needed in a PRT; Allies Greece might approach to cooperate with in a PRT; the kinds of resources the United States has provided Lithuania or other relatively small countries that have taken the lead on a PRT, and; an offer to coordinate a discussion of lessons learned with these or other PRT-lead nations. Additionally, it would be useful to give the Greeks a sense of whether NATO has identified a follow-on to the Greek Role 2 Medical Facility in Kabul, or whether the Greeks will be asked to stay after their 18-month commitment is up.

5. (C) Moving the government beyond its intense risk aversion is one of this mission's highest priority goals. Our long term PD strategy includes explaining why Greece has an interest in NATO's success and getting out the "good news" of Greece's role in ISAF. In the shorter term, we will continue to move Athens towards "yes" on a PRT by continuing to raise the idea at lower levels, while looking for an

appropriate high-level occasion (on the margins of the NATO informal Foreign Ministerial in Sofia, the HLCC in Athens, or the visit of another senior USG official to Athens) to clinch a deal. We understand that discussion are underway with Hungary about replacing the Dutch in Pol-e Khomri, the PRT most likely to change hands in the near future. If the Hungarians do step forward, we should still press for a Greek political commitment in principle now, with discussions on the time and place of the deployment to follow.

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